

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF

POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART

Fifth Series

ESTABLISHED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS, 1832

CONDUCTED BY R. CHAMBERS (SECUNDUS)

No. 214.—VOL. V.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1888.

PRICE 1½d.

EARLY BLOSSOMS.

THE 'firstling of the infant year' is undoubtedly the snowdrop. There is, or used to be, a popular belief that it ought to be in bloom by the 2d of February; but, in an ordinary year, this can seldom be the case, and then only under exceptional circumstances of culture or of situation. The idea itself is traceable to the times before the Reformation. The inhabitants of the conventional establishments of those days had, among the employments of their leisure hours, amused themselves in constructing a sort of floral calendar. According to this, some special flower was considered appropriate, and assigned to each day in the year; while many were looked upon as sacred to certain personages. The snowdrop was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and the day which was ascribed to it in the calendar was the Feast of Candlemas or Purification—otherwise, the 2d of February. It was consequently much cultivated in the gardens attached to convents and monasteries, whence, in the natural order of things, it would pass to those of the rich, and thence to those of the peasants and cottagers. It is in this way that the snowdrop has established itself in one or two places in England and Scotland, and given rise to the impression that it is really indigenous to the British Isles. This would seem, however, not to be the case. The places where it is found are nearly always in the neighbourhood of villages or country-houses; while, in a great many cases, the former vicinity of an abbey or other religious institution is either a fact well known or probable. It is doubtful if the snowdrop was ever really wild here, although there is no record, as in the case of many flowers, of when it was imported, or from what country the roots were first brought to England.

There would seem to be only two parts of Europe where the snowdrop is truly indigenous—Switzerland and the Rhine provinces. The statement in some French botanical works that it is found in France, must be received with caution. The localities assigned to it are those which appear to

be the most unlikely—namely, the west and the south. The flora, however, of Southern France is so entirely unlike that of our more northern latitudes, and so thoroughly characteristic of a warmer region, that it seems improbable that a plant like the snowdrop could find a place in it. The explanation here is probably the same as in the case of England: the plant has strayed from cultivation, and, possibly, in one or two localities, become perfectly naturalised. There is only one other snowdrop known to botanists besides our garden friend, and that is a kind which is found in the Asiatic provinces of Russia and Turkey. It does not greatly differ in shape or size from its European cousin, but having six outer leaves where our species has only three, it could not well be the progenitor of those known to us. The original habitat, then, of our snowdrop must be sought for in Europe, and it is very probable that Switzerland was the land of its birth. Professor Dalla Torre's *Flora of the Alps* gives it as 'locally abundant' on some of the meadows and slopes of that mighty chain; and in those spots it is very evident that it could be no waif from cultivation.

It must not, however, be supposed that the snowdrop is an Alpine plant, in the strict sense of the term. The impression that it is the hardiest of flowers, and, on the first approach of spring, rears its tiny head from under the snow and close up to the snow-line, is erroneous. Although it is never found in a wild state in flat or damp situations, it is far from being a native of very high regions. Dalla Torre certainly gives it a range up to four thousand or more feet; but it would seem to be very doubtful whether it ever actually occurs at such an elevation. It would perhaps be more correct to describe it as essentially a *sub-Alpine* plant, and in no way capable of supporting a very extreme degree of cold, or of flourishing under conditions greatly different from those it meets with in our gardens. The localities where it is most at home are woods or coppices which have a gentle slope to the south or west. It likes a certain amount of shade, but not too

cold a shade—just sufficient to afford shelter from the cutting winds of spring—and must have as much warmth as can be derived from the direct rays of the sun during some hours of the day, as well as from a protected position. If left to itself under these conditions, it will not only increase and multiply at a rapid rate, but the flowers will also be larger and more fragrant than any which can be produced by the most careful cultivation in a garden.

The snowdrop being essentially a northern flower, was unknown to the ancients. Linnaeus, consequently, when he came to arrange his 'Systema,' found no classical name ready to his hand, but had to invent one for himself. He took the two Greek words signifying 'milk' and 'flower,' and out of them made the compound *galanthus*, while to this he added the Latin epithet *nivalis*, 'snowy,' or 'belonging to the snow.' As a plant, then, of entirely modern lineage, and, so to say, a parvenu among flowers, it was impossible for the snowdrop to have attached to it any of those poetical legends with which the Greeks were accustomed to associate some of the best known flowers. There is, it is true, a legend connected with it, but it evidently belongs to the middle ages, and is, apparently, of monastic origin. It states that 'one day after the Fall, Eve stood in paradise lamenting the barrenness of the earth, which no longer produced vegetation, and where no flowers grew. An angel, pitying her sad condition, exposed as she was to the blinding snow which was falling at the time, came down to the earth to try to console her.' He listened to her complaints; and being moved with pity for so much grief, took in his hand a flake of the snow, and, breathing upon it, bade it take the form of a flower and bud and blow. He at the same time added that the little blossom should be a sign and a symbol to her that the winter was over, and that the sun and the summer would soon return. Eve prized her new treasure greatly, and praised it more than all the flowers which formerly bloomed in paradise. On raising her eyes to express her gratitude to the angel, he was nowhere to be seen; but on the place where he had stood was a snow-white ring, which she had no difficulty in recognising as composed of snowdrops.' This legend sufficiently betrays its northern origin. Independently of the snowdrop being unknown in southern or oriental countries, the idea of snow falling in those localities where the garden of Eden was commonly supposed to have been placed, is evidence enough that the story was composed by some dweller in higher latitudes.

But if the snowdrop is not gifted with an ancient pedigree, its immediate successor, the crocus, can, on the contrary, trace its descent to the very dawn of history itself. The Greeks, and after them the Romans, had an intense liking for the taste and scent of saffron, and consequently for the flower which produced it. Classical literature is full of affectionate allusions to the crocus. Homer makes the couch of Juno 'soft and close with dewy lotus, crocus, and hyacinth,' a passage which is imitated by Milton in the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*. Sophocles says that on the hill of Colonus 'there burst into bloom, by the dew of heaven, the narcissus with its beauteous clusters, and the crocus with its golden ray.' Horace

tells us that the stages of theatres were strewed with crocuses and other flowers; while Juvenal hopes that round the tombs of those guardians who have done their duty to their wards there may ever bloom 'the fragrant crocus and a perpetual spring.'

None of our yellow crocuses are of European origin; they come to us from the East, and appear to be comparatively recent importations. 'Cloth-of-Gold,' for instance, is a native of Turkey and the Crimea, while the original home of the large yellow crocus is Asia Minor. Many other kinds have no doubt been produced by the ingenuity of the Dutch gardeners, always skilful in their treatment of bulbs. The chief interest of the crocus lies, however, in the fact of its connection with the saffron of commerce. Twice in the course of history this latter drug has enjoyed a popularity which seems strange to us—once under the Greeks and Romans, and again in Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Saffron itself is nothing more than the dried stigmas of a certain purple crocus which blossoms in the autumn. It seems originally to have been brought from the East. Its name in any case is Eastern, being, it is said, merely a change of the Arabic word *zahfardan*. The Greeks and the Romans, it is true, knew nothing of this name, but always used the term *crocus* for saffron. The undoubted fact, however, of its having, on its reappearance in Europe, been imported from the East, confirms the tradition or notion of its oriental origin. It was, strangely enough, the scent which formed its chief attraction for the ancients. They regarded it as the most delicious of perfumes, and endeavoured to introduce it on every possible occasion. The floors of their halls and mansions, as also of their theatres, were strewed with it; and Pliny in one place recommends that the saffron should be bruised, in order the better to diffuse its fragrance. Its flavour was also greatly appreciated; and Beckmann says that 'in the oldest work on Cookery which has been handed down to us, and which is ascribed to Apicius, it appears that saffron was as much employed in seasoning dishes as for a perfume.'

With the overthrow, however, of the Roman empire, the taste for saffron, and even the plant itself, became lost. As to the precise period of its re-introduction into Europe, there is some little obscurity. Beckmann is of opinion that it was brought by the Moors into Spain, founding his conjecture on the Arabic derivation of the name. Earlier writers, however, all agree that it was brought back by the crusaders from the East. The first mention of it is, probably, in Hakluyt's *Voyages*, 1589. He says that 'a pilgrim, proposing to do good to his country, stole a head of saffron, and hid the same in his palmer's staff, which he had made hollow before on purpose, and so he brought this root into the realm with venture of his life; for, if he had been taken, by the law of the country whence it came, he had died for the fact.' Unfortunately, we have the same story, or legend, with regard to the introduction of silkworms' eggs, and the probability in each case is that the account is untrue. At all events, by the beginning of the fifteenth century we find it firmly established both in France and England. It was so largely cultivated at Walden,

in Essex, that the place came to be called, and has ever since been known as Saffron-Walden. Saffron Hill, in London, also owes its name to the fact of large quantities of the plant having been grown on the ground which formerly belonged to Ely House. It was popular as a perfume, and as a seasoning for various dishes; also as a dye. Above all, it was popular for medicinal purposes. The physicians of the time seem to have looked upon it as a veritable *elixir vite*. They ascribed to it every possible virtue under the sun, and applied to it such grand names as *Panacea vegetabilis* and *Aurum philosophorum*. Christopher Cattan (*Geomancie*, 1591) says that 'saffron hath power to quicken the spirits, and the virtue thereof pierceth by-and-by to the heart, provoking laughter and merriness; and they say that these properties come by the influence of the sun, unto whom it is subject, from whence she is ayded by her subtil nature, bright and sweet smelling.' As an accompaniment to cookery, it was much used during Lent, its medicinal properties being supposed to counteract the effects of the spare diet of the season.

By the sixteenth century, saffron had become a highly important article of commerce, while its high price rendered it a favourite article of adulteration. An edict of Henry II. of France, issued in the year 1550, says that 'for some time past a certain quantity of the said saffron has been found altered, disguised, and sophisticated by being mixed with oil, honey, and other mixtures, in order that the said saffron, which is sold by weight, may be rendered heavier; and some add to it other herbs, similar in colour and substance to beef over-boiled and reduced to threads; which saffron, thus mixed and adulterated, cannot be long kept, and is highly prejudicial to the human body; which, besides the said injury, may prevent the above said foreign merchants from purchasing it, to the great diminution of our revenues, and to the great detriment of foreign nations, against which we ought to provide.' It would appear, however, from an account of the adulteration of saffron written in the beginning of the present century, that what was described in the royal edict as herbs 'similar to beef over-boiled,' was in reality the article itself. The list of ingredients employed includes 'fibres of smoked beef'; but by what process these could be rendered similar to the bright yellow stigmas of the saffron crocus is not very clear. The other substances used for the purpose were mostly of vegetable origin, and include the stigmas of nearly all plants which were naturally of a similar colour. Besides these, the chopped flowers of the pomegranate and the petals of the marigold were also brought into requisition. To obtain, however, a really good imitation of saffron, reliance was chiefly placed on the yellow blossoms of the safflower (*Carthamus*), a native of Egypt, which, when dried, although of a deeper colour, were supposed to be near enough for all practical purposes. The safflower itself is still valuable as furnishing a brilliant red dye, and it is to this that that once fashionable article, ladies' rouge, owes, or ought to owe, its fascinating bloom.

The taste for saffron has only entirely died out within the limits of the present century. It is scarcely more than a generation ago that its pun-

gent and peculiar flavour could still be detected in certain articles of confectionery. Up to a very short time since, a few acres were cultivated, and still may be, in Cambridgeshire and Essex. The bulbs were planted about midsummer, in a rich light soil, and in rows some six inches apart. The flowers were gathered in the morning as soon as they were quite open, and the stigmas carefully picked out by hand. They were then placed between sheets of paper and dried in a kiln. The saffron was at one time pressed into small cakes and sent into the market in that form. This was, however, so persistently imitated by those engaged in adulteration, that cake-saffron, as it was called, got a bad name, and of late years the stigmas have always been sold loose. The French and Spanish saffron, however, was supposed to be better than that grown in England, and whatever comes into the market now is said to be imported from those countries.

THIS MORTAL COIL.

BY GRANT ALLEN, AUTHOR OF 'IN ALL SHADES,' ETC.

CHAPTER VII.—FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

THAT same night, as the Squire and Mrs Meysey sat by themselves towards the small-hours—after the girls had unanimously evacuated the drawing-room—discussing the affairs of the universe generally, as then and there envisaged, over a glass of claret-cup, the mother looked up at last with a sudden glance into the father's face and said, in a tone half-anxious, half-timid: 'Tom, did it happen to strike you this afternoon that that handsome cousin of Elsie Challoner's seemed to take a great fancy to our Winifred?'

The Squire stirred his claret-cup idly with his spoon. 'I suppose the fellow has eyes in his head,' he answered bluntly. 'No man in his senses could ever look at our little Winnie, I should think, Emily, and not fall over his ears in love with her.'

Mrs Meysey waited a minute or two more in silent suspense before she spoke again; then she said once more, very tentatively: 'He seems a tolerably nice young man, I think, Tom.'

'Oh, he's well enough, I daresay,' the Squire admitted grudgingly.

'A barrister, he says. That's a very good profession,' Mrs Meysey went on, still feeling her way by gradual stages.

'Never heard so in my life before,' the Squire grunted out. 'There are barristers and barristers. He gets no briefs. Lives on literature, by what he tells me: next door to living upon your wits, I call it.'

'But I mean, it's a gentleman's profession, anyhow, Tom, the bar.'

'Oh, the man's a gentleman, of course, if it comes to that—a perfect gentleman; and an Oxford man, and a person of culture, and all that sort of thing—I don't deny it. He's a very presentable fellow, too, in his own way; and most intelligent: understands the riparian proprietors' question as easy as anything.—You can ask him to dinner whenever you choose, if that's what you're driving at.'

Mrs Meysey called another halt for a few seconds before she reopened fire, still more timidly than ever. 'Tom, do you know I rather fancy

he really likes our Winifred?' she murmured, gasping.

'Of course he likes our Winifred,' the Squire repeated, with profound conviction in every tone of his voice. 'I should like to know who on earth there is that doesn't like our Winifred! Nothing new in that. I could have told you so myself. Go ahead with it, then.—What next, now, Emily?'

'Well, I think, Tom, if I'm not mistaken, Winifred seemed rather inclined to take a fancy to him too, somehow.'

Thomas Wyville Meysey laid down his glass incredulously on the small side-table. He didn't explode, but he hung fire for a moment. 'You women are always fancying things,' he said at last, with a slight frown. 'You think you're so precious quick, you do, at reading other people's faces. I don't deny you often succeed in reading them right. You read mine precious often, I know, when I don't want you to—that I can swear to. But sometimes, Emily, you know you read what isn't in them. That's the way with all decipherers of hieroglyphics. They see a great deal more in things than ever was put there. You remember that time when I met old Hillier down by the copse yonder?—'

'Yes, yes, I remember,' Mrs Meysey admitted, checking him at the outset with an astute concession. She had cause to remember the facts, indeed, for the Squire reminded her of that one obvious and palpable mistake about the young fox-cubs at least three times a week, the year round, on an average. 'I was wrong that time; I know I was, of course. You weren't in the least annoyed with Mr Hillier. But I think—I don't say I'm sure, observe, dear—but I think Winifred's likely to take a fancy in time to this young Mr Massinger. Now, the question is, if she does take a fancy to him—a serious fancy—and he to her—what are you and I to do about it?'

As she spoke, Mrs Meysey looked hard at the lamp, and then at her husband, wondering with what sort of grace he would receive this very revolutionary and upsetting suggestion. For herself—though mothers are hard to please—it may as well be admitted off-hand, she had fallen a ready victim at once to Hugh Massinger's charms and brilliancy and blandishments. Such a nice young man, so handsome and gentlemanly, so adroit in his talk, so admirable in his principles, and though far from rich, yet, in his way, distinguished! A better young man, darling Winifred was hardly likely to meet with. But what would dear Tom think about him? she wondered. Dear Tom had such very expansive not to say utopian ideas for Winifred—thought nobody but a Duke or a Prince of the blood half good enough for her: though, to be sure, experience would seem to suggest that Dukes and Princes, after all, are only human, and not originally very much better than other people. Whatever superior moral excellence we usually detect in the finished product may no doubt be safely set down in ultimate analysis to the exceptional pains bestowed by society upon their ethical education.

The Squire looked into his claret-cup profoundly for a few seconds before answering, as if he expected to find it a perfect Dr Dee's divining crystal, big with hints as to his daughter's future;

and then he burst out abruptly with a grunt: 'I suppose we must leave the answering of that question entirely to Winnie.'

Mrs Meysey did not dare to let her internal sigh of relief escape her throat; that would have been too compromising, and would have alarmed dear Tom. So she stifled it quietly. Then dear Tom was not wholly averse, after all, to this young Mr Massinger. *He*, too, had fallen a victim to the poet's wiles. That was well; for Mrs Meysey, with a mother's eye, had read Winifred's heart through and through. But we must not seem to give in too soon. A show of resistance runs in the grain with women. 'He's got no money,' she murmured suggestively.

The Squire flared up. 'Money!' he cried, with infinite contempt, 'money! money! Who the dickens says anything to me about money? I believe that's all on earth you women think about.—Money indeed! Much I care about money, Emily. I daresay the young fellow hasn't got money. What then? Who cares for that? He's got money's worth. He's got brains; he's got principles; he's got the will to work and to get on. He'll be a Judge in time, I don't doubt. If a man like that were to marry our Winifred, with the aid we could give him and the friends we could find him, he ought to rise by quick stages to be—anything you like—Lord Chancellor, or Postmaster-general, or Archbishop of Canterbury, for the matter of that, if your tastes happen to run in that direction.'

'He hasn't done much at the bar yet,' Mrs Meysey continued, playing her fish dexterously before landing it.

'Hasn't done much! Of course he hasn't done much! How the dickens could he? Can a man make briefs for himself, do you suppose? He's given himself up, he tells me, to earning a livelihood by writing for the papers. Penny-a-lining; writing for the papers. He had to do it. It's a pity, upon my word, a clever young fellow like that—he understands the riparian proprietors' question down to the very ground—should be compelled to turn aside from his proper work at the bar to serve tables, so to speak—to gain his daily bread by penny-a-lining. If Winifred were to take a fancy to a young man like that, now—' The Squire paused, and eyed the light through his glass reflectively.

'He's very presentable,' Mrs Meysey went on, re-arranging her workbox, and still angling cleverly for dear Tom's indignation.

'He's a man any woman might be perfectly proud of,' the Squire retorted in a thunderous voice with firm conviction.

Mrs Meysey followed up her advantage persistently for twenty minutes, insinuating every possible hint against Hugh, and leading the Squire deeper and deeper into a hopeless slough of unqualified commendation. At the end of that time she said quietly: 'Then I understand, Tom, that if Winifred and this young Massinger take a fancy to one another, you don't put an absolute veto on the idea of their getting engaged, do you?'

'I only want Winnie to choose for herself,' the Squire answered with prompt decision. 'Not that I suppose for a moment there's anything in this young fellow's talking a bit to her. Men will flirt, and girls will let 'em. Getting engaged

indeed! You count your chickens before the eggs are laid. A man can't look at a girl nowadays, but you women must take it into your precious heads at once he wants to go straight off to church and marry her. However, for my part, I'm not going to interfere in the matter one way or the other. I'd rather she'd marry the man she loves, and the man who loves her, whenever he turns up, than marry fifty thousand pounds and the best estate in all Suffolk.'

Mrs Meysey had carried her point with honours. 'Perhaps you're right, dear,' she said diplomatically, as who should yield to superior wisdom. It was her policy not to appear too eager.

'Perhaps I'm right!' the Squire echoed, half in complacency and half in anger. 'Of course I'm right. I know I'm right, Emily. Why, I was reading in a book the other day a most splendid appeal from some philosophic writer or other about making fewer marriages in future to please Mamma, and more to suit the tastes of the parties concerned, and subserve the good of coming generations. I think it was an article in one of the magazines. It's the right way, I'm sure of that; and in Winifred's case I mean to stick to it.'

So, from that day forth, if it was Hugh Massinger's intention or desire to prosecute his projected military operations against Winifred Meysey's hand and heart, he found at least a benevolent neutral in the old Squire, and a secret, silent, but none the less powerful domestic ally in Mrs Meysey. It is not often that a penniless suitor thus enlists the sympathies of the parental authorities, who ought by precedent to form the central portion of the defensive forces, on his own side in such an aggressive enterprise. But with Hugh Massinger, nobody ever even noticed it as a singular exception. He was so clever, so handsome, so full of promise, so courteous and courtly in his demeanour to young and old, so rich in future hopes and ambitions, that not the Squire alone, but everybody else who came in contact with his easy smile, accepted him beforehand as almost already a Lord Chancellor, or a Poet Laureate, or an Archbishop of Canterbury, according as he might choose to direct his talents into this channel or that; and failed to be surprised that the Meyseys or anybody else on earth should accept him with effusion as a favoured postulant for the hand of their only daughter and heiress. There are a few such universal favourites here and there in the world: whenever you meet one, smile with the rest, but remember that his recipe is a simple one—Humbug.

Hugh stopped for two months or more at Whitestrand, and during all that time he saw much both of Elsie and of Winifred. The Meyseys introduced him with cordial pleasure to all the melancholy gaieties of the sleepy little peninsula. He duly attended with them the somnolent garden-parties on the smooth lawns of neighbouring Squires: the monotonous picnics up the tidal stream of the meandering Char; the heavy dinners at every local rector's and vicar's and resident baronet's; with all the other dead-alive entertainments of the dullest and most stick-in-the-mud corner of all England. The London poet enlivened them all, however, with his never-failing flow of languid humour, and his slow,

drawled-out readiness of Pall-Mall repartee. It was a comfort to him, indeed, to get among these unspoiled and unsophisticated children of nature; he could palm off upon them as original the last good thing of that fellow Hatherley's from the smoking-room of the Cheyne Row Club, or fire back upon them, undetected, dim reminiscences of pungent chaff overheard in brilliant West-end drawing-rooms. And then, there were Elsie and Winifred to amuse him; and Hugh, luxurious, easy-going epicurean philosopher that he was, took no trouble to decide in his own mind even what might be his ultimate intentions towards either fair lady, satisfied only, as he phrased it to his inner self, to take the goods the gods provided him for the passing moment, and to keep them both well in hand together. 'How happy could I be with either,' sings Captain Macheath in the oft-quoted couplet, 'were t' other dear charmer away.' Hugh took a still more lenient view of his personal responsibilities than the happy-go-lucky knight of the highway: he was quite content to be blest, while he could, with both at once, asking no questions, for conscience' sake, of his own final disposition, marital or otherwise, towards one or the other, but leaving the problem of his matrimonial arrangements for fate, or chance, to settle in its own good fashion.

It was just a week after his arrival at Whitestrand that he went up one morning early to the Hall. Elsie and Winifred were seated together on a rug under the big tree, engaged in reading one novel between them.

'You must wish Winifred many happy returns of the day,' Elsie called out gaily, looking up from her book as Hugh approached them. 'It's her birthday, Hugh; and just see what a lovely, delightful present Mr Meysey's given her!'

Winifred held out the present at arm's length for his admiration. It was a pretty little watch, in gold and enamel, with her initials engraved on the back on a broad shield. 'It's just a beauty! I should love one like it myself!' Elsie cried enthusiastically. 'Did you ever see such a dear little thing? It's keyless too, and so exquisitely finished. It really makes me feel quite ashamed of my own poor old battered silver one.'

Hugh took the watch and examined it carefully. He noted the maker's name upon the dial, and opening the back, made a rapid mental memorandum of the number. A sudden thought had flashed across him at the moment. He waited only a few minutes at the Hall, and then asked the two girls if they could walk down into the village with him. He had a telegram to send off, he said, which he had only just that moment remembered. Would they mind stepping over with him as far as the post-office?

They strolled together into the sleepy High Street. At the office, Hugh wrote and sent off his telegram. It was addressed to a well-known firm of watchmakers in Ludgate Hill. 'Could you send me by to-morrow evening's post, to address as below, a lady's gold and enamel watch, with initials "E. C., from H. M." engraved on shield on back, but in every other respect precisely similar to No. 2479 just supplied to Mr Meysey, of Whitestrand Hall? If so, telegraph back cash-price at once, and cheque for

amount shall be sent immediately. Reply paid.—Hugh Massinger, *Fisherman's Rest*, Whitestrand, Suffolk.'

Before lunch-time, the reply had duly arrived: 'Watch shall be sent on receipt of cheque. Price twenty-five guineas.' So far, good. It was a fair amount for a journeyman journalist to pay for a present; but, as Hugh shrewdly reflected, it would kill two birds with one stone. Day after to-morrow was Elsie's birthday. The watch would give Elsie pleasure; and Hugh, to do him justice, thoroughly loved giving pleasure to anybody, especially a pretty girl, and above all Elsie. But it could also do him no harm in the Meyseys' eyes to see that, journeyman journalist as he was, he was earning enough to afford to throw away twenty-five guineas on a mere present to a governess-cousin. There is a time for economy, and there is a time for lavishness. The present moment clearly came under the latter category.

THE PEOPLES OF FUR-LAND.

It used to be an article of faith among ethnologists that Alaska had been peopled from Japan, this belief being founded upon the reports of old Russian travellers, who fancied they saw some physical resemblance between the Aleuts and the Japanese. But the Aleuts only inhabit one of the divisions of Alaska, and that the smallest, and there are several other races inhabiting this enormous and little explored territory, whose distinctive features and racial characteristics form an interesting subject of examination. From what is now known, the natives of Alaska can be broadly classified in four great divisions—namely, the Eskimo or Innuit, the Aleut or Oonangan, the Athabaskan or Tinnel, and the Thlinket tribes.

The Eskimos are called Innuits by some writers because the name is derived from a native word signifying 'man,' and is supposed to be their own designation of themselves. In Alaska the Eskimos number altogether about eighteen thousand, inhabiting most of the coast-line, as well as the interior portions of the Arctic division. Where they came from is of course pure matter of conjecture, but one theory is, that they originated in the centre of the American continent, and that their settlement on the Alaskan coasts was coincident with the general migration which led a portion of the same race to Greenland. The theory of a common origin finds some support in the fact that the *kaiak* or skin-canoe of the Alaskans is identical in construction with that of the Greenlanders. This *kaiak*, which is a covered boat, is found only among pure Eskimos, and is lost wherever there has been intermixture with other races. This is a curious fact, as it forms a distinct mark of identity.

There are several subdivisions or tribes of the Eskimos, some of them possessing marked distinctive traits; but certain features and habits they possess in common. They live in winter in underground, sod-covered houses, and in skin-

covered tents in summer. They use implements of stone, of ivory, and of bone; they live upon fish, including seal and walrus and raw blubber; and they clothe themselves generally in skins, although in parts where there is constant intercourse with the traders and whalers, they have sometimes adopted cloth garments for summer wear. And yet one can scarcely call their subdivisions 'tribes,' seeing that there is no evidence of an essential feature of tribal existence—chieftainship. A headman there is in each village, called the oomailik; but his function seems more that of a commission agent in negotiating with other tribes and foreigners, than that of governor. In fact, he appears to possess no real influence over the people, and far less attention is paid to him than to the 'medicine-man' or shaman. These shamans—otherwise sorcerers—are the masters-of-ceremonies at all the village festivals, which are frequent during the long dark winters, as well as the representatives of all the supernatural or religious belief which the Eskimos possess. When joint action is necessary, the plans are arranged by a council of the elders, and by such decisions all the inhabitants of a village are held bound.

The coast tribes are noted for more intelligence and shrewdness, which is probably more the result of longer and larger intercourse with white races than of natural superiority. They are also superior physically, the Kaialigumute of Norton Sound, for instance, being well built, of medium stature, round-faced, white-toothed, with bronze complexions, and of quick movements. The hair is straight, glossy, and black, but coarse, and the men usually have both beards and moustaches. Polygamy is not common, although not unknown; and, on the other hand, separations of married couples are rare; and although a man may marry again if his wife dies, the line is drawn at the third. The marriage ceremony of the Eskimos is extremely simple. After obtaining the consent of the parents, the bridegroom just goes and takes his bride away to his own people, and the knot is tied. The families are not large, a woman's offspring rarely exceeding two—a family of four being quite phenomenal. Marriages take place at a very early age, and at twenty-five a wife is an old woman.

A pleasing feature in the Eskimos is their kindness to their children. These are treated with the greatest indulgence, and allowed to do and to have pretty much what they please until of an age to support themselves. But they are taught the use of the arms and the tools possessed by their tribe, and miniature implements are constructed for their education. The standard of manhood is neither twenty-one years nor the passing of 'exams,' but the killing of a wolf, a reindeer, or a beluga-whale. After such an enterprise, a youth becomes a man. Meanwhile, the various stages of his adolescence are marked by curious ceremonies; that is to say, feasts are held when his hair is trimmed for the first time (the men wear the hair trimmed all round the head, while the women wear it loose or plaited); when he first goes to sea *alone* in a *kaiak*; when he makes his first expedition in snow-shoes; or when his lip is cut to receive the *labrets* or ornaments of

stone and bone which are worn on the under lip on both sides of the mouth. Thus it will be seen that the rising generation is regarded with a full share of reverence, and parents will sometimes even go to great expense to procure amulets or charms from the shamans to preserve the young ones from danger and from the malice of evil spirits.

All the Eskimos are superstitious about death, and although they hold festivals in memory of departed friends, they will generally carry a dying person to some abandoned hut to drag out his days in hunger and neglect. After the death of a husband or wife, the survivor—among the coast tribes, at anyrate—cuts the front hair short and fasts for twenty-five days.

The festivals—which, as we have said, are numerous—are often held in a sort of common hall called the kashga, which is built of the same pattern as the semi-subterranean winter-houses, but is often as large as sixty feet square, and twenty or thirty feet high. This kashga also serves for various other purposes. It is used for the public bath; for the deliberations of the council of elders in communal questions; for the preparation of skins and the manufacture of sleds; for the reception of visitors; and for the sleeping-place of males who have not huts of their own. The festivals consist of singing and dancing of a primitive character, and then gorging with fish and blubber, with the additional luxury of melted reindeer fat, when it can be procured. All the food, both fish and flesh, goes through some process of cooking before being eaten, although the 'higher' it is, the more it is appreciated.

The tribes of Norton Sound hold a festival every year in October or November in memory of deceased kinsmen, and Petroff thus describes the performances: 'At sunset the men assemble in the kashga, and, after a hurried bath, ornament each other by tracing various figures on the naked back with a mixture of oil and charcoal. Two boys, who for this occasion are respectively named the Raven and the Hawk, are in attendance, mixing the paint, &c. Finally, the faces also are thickly smeared; and then the females are summoned into the kashga. After a brief lapse of time a noise is heard, shrieks and yells, snorting and roaring; and the disguised men, emerging from the firehole, show their heads above the floor, blowing and puffing like seals. It is impossible to distinguish any complete human figure, as some are crawling with their feet foremost, others running on their hands and feet, while the head of another is seen protruding between the legs of a companion. They all cling together and move in concert like one immense snake. A number of men wear masks representing the heads of animals, and the unsightly beings advance upon the spectators, but chiefly endeavouring to frighten the women, who have no means of escaping molestation except by buying off the actors with presents. Knowing what was before them, they have brought the kantags or wooden bowls full of delicious morsels—beluga blubber, walrus-meat, whale-oiled berries, and other dainties. When each of the maskers has eaten and filled a bowl or two with delicacies to take home, they indulge in a pantomime and gesture-play of a highly grotesque character. After completing the ceremony in

the kashga, the maskers frequently visit some of the dwellings, and receive gifts in each, the whole performance ending with singing, dancing, and feasting in the kashga.'

It is difficult to formulate the religious beliefs of the Eskimos. They regard the shamans as mediators between them and the world of spirits; but it is doubtful whether they believe that the sorcerers can actually control the spirits. Some of these sorcerers are very cunning in tricks of sleight-of-hand; and indeed, unless they are considerably accomplished in such performances, they are little regarded.

Our description is general, because it is impossible to sketch the differences of all the subdivisions of the race. It may be mentioned, however, that the Kaniaks, who people the island of Kadiak and neighbourhood, are of superior physique, although not of *morale*, and were erroneously supposed by the Russians to be the same as the Aleuts, to be presently mentioned. Among the Kaniaks, again, there is a definite tribal authority, and the chiefs are important personages. Then as to superstitions, there is a large tribe on the Kuskokvium river where is found a curious blending of pagan ideas with Christian traditions filtered from the Russian mission further north, for the missionaries themselves never reached the Kuskokvium.

The Aleuts—an interesting people who inhabit a considerable portion of the coasts of the Alaska peninsula, and the adjacent islands called the Aleutian Islands—are the people whom the Russians believed to be of Japanese origin. While the theory seems unfounded, their origin seems yet unsettled, and their own traditions throw little light on the subject. They are quite distinct from the Eskimos, but have evidently had intimate relations with the Eskimos for many generations, if not for centuries. A Russian priest called Veniaminof spent some years on the Aleutian Islands, and carefully collected all the traditions he could from the mouths of the people. These point clearly to a migration at some time from 'a great land' or continent, from which they were driven by wars; but opinions are divided as to whether the continent was Asia or America. The most recent United States explorers are confident that the Aleuts are an American race. Be that as it may, their traditions point to a previous occupation of the islands by some other people, for they say that their grandfathers were told by their grandfathers that they found deserted dwellings on the shores. To what remote period this may point it is impossible to tell, for these primitive races are hopelessly indefinite in matters of chronology.

The Aleuts at one time had certainly some belief in a Creator, but they did not worship him nor 'connect him with the management of the world.' They believed in two classes of spirits, evil and good, and they worshipped what seemed to affect the influence of these spirits. Hence shamanism prevailed, but the shamans themselves were not held in high respect. A belief in the immortality of the soul is argued from the practice which the old Aleuts had of killing a slave on the death of any important member of the tribe, so as to provide attendance for the departed brother in the other world. They also believed in the actual though invisible presence of the

spirits of their departed friends, who help the living in times of danger.

The Aleuts lived in patriarchal tribes, and the head of the family was the chief of the village. These chiefs had distinct authority, but it was not supreme, and did not entitle them to any special honours. When the Russians came, they distinguished some of these chiefs, and tried to give them a political importance. Their present function seems to be to act as overseers in the seal and otter fishing for the American Companies. The Aleuts are not a numerous people, however, and probably do not now exceed two thousand all told.

But while the Aleuts are tending towards civilisation, if they are not actually 'Christianised,' the reverse is the case with the tribes of Athabaskan Indians, who people the Yukon Valley, and are found also in some numbers in both the Kuskokwim and Kadiak divisions. They are distinctly a branch of the great race of North American Indians which extend from the MacKenzie River in the north of the continent to Mexico in the south. At what period they migrated from the interior to the inclement regions of Alaska, it is impossible to say, and their traditions do not help us to guess. They have certainly kept themselves very much to themselves, and have neither intermixed to any great extent with the Eskimos and Aleuts, nor have, until quite recently, held much intercourse with the Russian and American representatives of the white races. As they are now, they probably have been for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years—nomadic, reserved, self-contained, active, hardy, keen-sighted, and fearless—skilful in the chase, and cruel and treacherous in war. They are divided into clans, and are believed to preserve totemism, or the designation of families by the names and emblems of birds and animals, between whom intermarriage is forbidden. They live in log-houses, paint their faces, wear skins in winter, and—except in the extreme north of their range—go with the head uncovered and decorated with feathers. Some of them have traditions of a race of giants 'living to the northward,' who, ages ago, invaded their territory and killed many of their people. Once, they say, one of these giants came down from the mountains, and as he went through the villages, caught up a man in each hand, and after knocking their heads together, placed them inside his 'parka' or skin-coat. Is not this very suggestive of Homer's story of Polyphemus? Other traditions tell of a race of dwarfs away to the north, who may be the small Arctic Eskimos, and of big fish like mountains, which are doubtless the Arctic whales. They also tell of a fearful eruption from one of the volcanic mountains; and it is noteworthy that a similar tradition exists among all the other natives of Alaska.

In the south-eastern division is found another branch of the Indian race—the Thlinkets—and these are, next to the Eskimos, the most numerous of the aborigines of Alaska. They number about seven thousand, and are distributed both on the mainland coast and the islands. Among the Thlinkets, totemism is very pronounced, and forms even a stronger tie than blood relationship. The totem clans are named Raven, Bear, Wolf, Whale, and so on; and as men may not marry in their

own clans, the children belong to the clan of the mother. The Thlinkets are the most advanced of all the races we have mentioned, as they have also the best section of Alaska for their habitat. They are clever navigators in their canoes, are expert fishers and hunters, dexterous in carving and plaiting, skilful in building, and 'cute in trade.'

Thlinket traditions tell of two heroes who, at the beginning of the world, fought with the spirits of darkness for the future good of mankind. These two heroes or gods were the founders of the Raven and the Wolf clans; but neither the raven nor the wolf occupies any important place in their mythology. Their traditions also point to a migration from the interior of America, and a similarity has been traced between their language and that of the Apaché and Aztec tribes: they have all the physical characteristics of the average North American Indian, and their prevailing vice is indolence.

As regards religion, we find among the Thlinket tribes a distinct notion of a Creator. The most important personage in their mythology is Yeshl, who was the ancestor of the Raven clan, and who seems to be credited with the creation of all physical objects. He is the friend of man, existed before he was born, never grows old, and never dies. He sends reminders of his existence with the east wind, which is supposed to blow from his abode. He has a son, who is even fonder of man than Yeshl himself, and frequently intercedes when the father is filled with wrath against the people for ill-doing. We have here a striking approach to certain peculiarities of the Christian faith.

The Thlinkets, however, do not believe that all men sprang from the same stock, but that Yeshl travelled from land to land, and made a new man in each with a different language. After he had finished his work, he said: 'I am now going away, but my eye will be always on you. If you live wicked lives, you cannot come to me, as the good and brave only can live in my place.' Sir James Douglas, of the Hudson's Bay Company, says that 'the Thlinkets think that there is a future state of retributive rewards and punishments. After death, the souls of men ascend through successive stages one over another, like the stories of a house, to the highest heaven, where they find a strong gate guarded by a giant, who knows the name of every spirit that makes its appearance there. After proclaiming the name aloud, he proceeds to question the spirit regarding its past life, either by receiving it into heaven, or driving it back to the inferior stages, where it wanders about comfortless amid yawning gulfs, opening before it at every step. The knowledge of these things has no perceptible effect on their conduct; they steal, cheat, and lie whenever they feel an interest in doing so, without any visible apprehension of incurring Yeshl's displeasure. They admit that theft, falsehood, and robbery are criminal, but nevertheless have recourse to them without hesitation whenever it suits their purpose.'

Here we must close our rapid and necessarily imperfect sketch of the strange Peoples of Fur-land. We have said enough to show how much of interest there is about them, and how many ethnological and mythological questions they suggest. Even now, they are as

little known as the strange weird regions in which they hunt and fish, are born, marry, fight, toil, gorge, and die. In the great struggle for existence, surely their part is neither without importance nor without instruction.

HELEN'S ESCAPE.

By H. F. ABELL.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAP. I.

PING! crash! and, shattered into a thousand pieces, down came the bust of Molière which stood at the top of the bookcase in my room at No. 5 Rue de Douai, Paris. This was on the evening of May 27, 1871, and the Commune was desperately gasping its last breath in the ubiquitous presence of the victorious Versailles troops of Macmahon.

'Better the bust of Molière than my head,' I remarked to myself as I quitted my easel, at which I was trying to work, and went to the window to peer out into the street. The scene which met my furtive gaze through the half-opened *persiennes* I can never forget. Almost under my window—for No. 5 was but the third house from the corner of the street—was what had been a large and well-constructed barricade, composed of street stones piled around a Clichy-Odéon omnibus, a couple of nightcarts, and a miscellaneous heap of obstructions—it's front facing the Rue Laval, its two sides commanding the Rue Pigalle, and its rear towards the Rue de Douai. All about it were stretched the corpses of men, in blue or white blouses or hybrid uniforms, who had fallen during the night; and against the walls of the opposite houses were half-a-dozen wretches slowly dying from their wounds, and calling aloud to be put out of their misery. Everywhere else, rifles, accoutrements, shattered fragments of the barricade, empty wine bottles, and—blood.

I had been a close prisoner in the house for four days; I had been made to assist in the construction of the barricade described above, in spite of my plea of 'Civis Britannicus sum'; but I had determined not to fight, and, favoured by darkness and the drunkenness of the Communist sentries, had managed to slip home unobserved. The bullet which had destroyed Molière was the first which had fairly entered my room, although, during the three preceding days, there had been severe fighting in the street and my *persiennes* were riddled almost to fragments. I had only ventured to look out once before, for the fate of those who looked out of window dangled before my eyes in the shape of two or three motionless heads and arms hanging over window ledge; but the arrival of the bullet stimulated my curiosity, and I remained, lying flat on the balcony, peeping through the iron-work of its railing. There were not more than a score of men left in the dilapidated barricade, and these were either too drunk or too desperate to fly. About four hundred yards up the Rue Laval I saw a blue mass, tipped with steel, which I guessed to be the Versailles troops advancing from their capture of the Buttes Chaumont and the Belleville heights, to the destruction of what was almost the last hornet's nest. Presently, there was a tremendous volley; the men

in the barricade yelled and crouched down, rose up and fired. Then the street was filled with white smoke; but I could hear the clatter of feet advancing at the *pas gymnastique*, followed by yells of defiance, cries of agony, the crash of falling obstacles, and more volleys. The smoke cleared, the 'Reds' were rushing along the street past my door, followed by the cheering troops. Now and then, a man threw up his arms and fell flat on his face; the others staggered on; there were more cries of agony, which told me that the bayonet was doing its sickening work. Then all was over, and the Commune was dead as far as fighting was concerned, although the lurid glare reflected on the evening sky in half-a-dozen directions sufficiently proclaimed that it had not died without a terrible Parthian shot.

We—that is, my Italian landlord and I, the only occupants of a house usually filled from basement to attics with artists and art students—had not an atom of food or a drop of drink in the house; and I, determined to get as far as the *charcutier* at the corner—now opened for the benefit of the Versailles sentries grouped all about—for the purpose of taking in supplies. So I crept out cautiously—for I knew that the victors, maddened by resistance and bloodshed, would not hesitate to shoot upon mere suspicion—bought what I required, and returned, having been absent half an hour.

It was half-dark when I reached my room again, and the weird gray light which came from the west, and made a strange pattern on the floor as it pierced my battered *persiennes*, seemed an appropriate tint for the close of such an awful day. I felt its influence, and, safe as I was, moved gently, as in a house of death. Then I was amazed to see a man sitting, or rather lying, in my armchair. When I approached nearer, I saw that he was wounded and insensible; that his face and his left arm were bound up in bloody rags, and that his tattered clothing was besmeared with mud and chalk and blood. I poured some brandy down his throat, and he revived. 'Thank God!' he exclaimed—'thank God!' But he was so exhausted that his head sunk back again. He had uttered those words in English, and, astonished as I was to find him in my room at all, I was still more so when I saw he was a fellow-countryman.

Presently he made an effort and sat up. 'You're all right,' I said, as I noticed he looked fearfully and anxiously around, as if pursued; 'you'll be better when you've had something to eat and drink.'

His face brightened at the sound of my English speech. 'You are an Englishman,' he said. 'I am glad. These brutes have nearly done for me. Look here!'—as he spoke, he undid the bandage from his hand—'that's a bayonet-wound.' As he showed it, a piece of glass fell from his sleeve or his bandage to the ground. Seeing it, he added: 'And I had to jump clean through a window. But I'm safe here? You won't give me up?'

'Of course I won't,' I replied. 'Why should I?'

'Well, you see I'm a banker here. I heard that the Commune had made a raid on more than one business house for what they call "contributions to the holy cause of universal liberty." I

happened to have a lot of securities which had been deposited with me for safety by wealthy Parisians. I heard that the Communists were on the scent, and I escaped with them just in time. The soldiers entered the house just as I left it, chased me, fired at me, wounded me in the head and hand, and I got into a shop. I was followed there, fired at again, and just jumped through the window in time to avoid an ugly push with a bayonet. But I'm not quite comfortable, for they might be here at any moment.'

His mind was evidently unhinged by what he had gone through; for, in spite of my assurances that the Commune was a thing of the past, and that order was re-established, whilst he ate and drank with avidity what I set before him, at every unusual sound he started to his feet in the greatest alarm. However, food and drink gave him courage; and although he refused to have his wounds dressed, and remained with his face almost hidden in hideous bandages, he accepted my invitation to remain where he was for the night. Over a cigar and a bottle of Médoc I found him to be an exceptionally intelligent and well-informed man, who had been at an English public school and university, and had been settled in Paris many years. Personally, he said, he was ruined by the Commune; but he was glad to have been able to save the property of his clients, and had no doubt but that they would make him some compensation for the losses he had sustained in guarding their interests.

He refused to occupy my spare room, but preferred to sleep in my armchair; and at midnight, when we separated, he said: 'My name is Rayne—Dixon Rayne, of the firm of Rayne & Company, Rue le Pelletier. I don't know how I can ever repay you adequately for your kindness to me to-night; but be sure that I shall endeavour to do so.'

When I entered the room the next morning, he was gone.

Now, there were two or three little things about Mr Rayne and the circumstances of his escape, which, coupled with the fact of his sudden disappearance, struck me as being rather odd, and instinctively I felt rather relieved when he was gone. Of course his story was plausible enough, for I knew that the Communists had not hesitated to lay their hands upon all the money and valuables and securities they could find, under the plea of *pro bono publico*, but in reality for personal enrichment. But why he should have displayed such fear of arrest was strange, when he must have known that all cause for fear was removed by the triumph of the Versailles troops. Again, he did not ask my name, as a man in receipt of a kindness and wishful to repay it would generally do. Neither, upon searching the Directory for Paris, could I find any such firm as Rayne & Company either in the Rue le Pelletier or out of it. Lastly, what little I could see of my visitor's face for the rags which he so assiduously preserved, did not impress me, although I knew very well that in a hurried flight for life, Apollo himself would assuredly be shorn of much of his natural beauty.

However, Mr Rayne, good or bad, was gone, and there was an end of it, as I thought, and I was soon too busily occupied with my own affairs

to trouble my head about him. Shortly afterwards, I ventured out for a tour of exploration amidst the ruins of defaced, despoiled Paris, perhaps also with a view to the reproduction upon canvas of such incidents as I had witnessed or could imagine. When I returned home, I found an official in police uniform in my room. 'Monsieur is English?' he asked.

I admitted the fact.

'Has Monsieur any countrymen of his in the house or anywhere about?'

I replied that I knew of none.

The official described himself as *dissolated*, but it was his duty to search. Accordingly, he searched high and low, cupboard and drawer, passage and closet. 'I am obliged to Monsieur,' he said as he re-entered my studio. Suddenly, he stooped and picked up from the floor the piece of glass which had fallen from Mr Rayne's arm bandage; and I noticed that it was stained glass of a yellow colour, such as may be seen sometimes in the staircase windows of Parisian houses, but never in a shop front.

The officer looked keenly at me as he held the glass, and his remarkable politeness at once gave way to an official abruptness which was evidently more natural to him.

'How did this come here?' he asked. I suppose I must have looked almost guilty, for he repeated the question in a more peremptory manner, as I stood wondering how I should answer; so there was nothing to be done but to tell him all that had happened on the night of Rayne's arrival. After a series of minute questions concerning my visitor, the purport of which I could not guess, and my answers to which he carefully noted down, he left me.

I lit a pipe and pondered over this strange matter for an hour; then I thought I would go to breakfast on the boulevards. Close to the street door was a tall man in ordinary civilian dress, smoking a cigar, and apparently interested in the work of demolition of the barricade which was going on. He glanced carelessly at me, and I passed on; but on reaching the crossing at the church of Notre-Dame de Lorette, I looked round to see if the way was clear, and behold he was following me at a distance of fifty yards, and so on down the Rue Lafitte, on to the boulevard, and over to the Café du Cardinal, so that I knew I was being watched. The same man, unless he was disguised, was not engaged on the job again; but I seemed to feel instinctively that the eye of the law was on me, and some one was intrusted with the duty of observing my slightest movements.

Finally, to cut a long story short, I was visited by two gentlemen in *mufti*, although they were clearly officials, who drove with me to the depot of the Prefecture of Police, where I was submitted to a searching examination by a magistrate concerning Mr Rayne, and allowed to go, after I had been actually thanked and apologised to for the trouble and inconvenience to which I had been put.

Piecing all the evidence together with the nature of the questions put to me, I came to the conclusion that Mr Rayne must have been a political offender, or a spy, or perhaps even a Communist leader.

In three weeks' time I had cleared up my

affairs in Paris, and after an unexpectedly prolonged sojourn in the city of famine and bloodshed, returned gladly enough to my own home amidst the Surrey hills.

IMPROVEMENTS IN TANNING.

NOTHING is more remarkable in the history of the industrial arts than the fact that the most ancient of these arts—that of preparing skins for clothing—has stood still with Chinese persistency, while those of spinning and weaving have advanced by leaps and bounds. Skins of beasts killed in the chase were, without doubt, the primitive clothing of our race. Some process, therefore, akin to tanning must have been pursued long before the days of Simon the tanner, in order to prevent the skins from putrefying and to render them durable. As it was in the beginning, so it is now; a substance known as tannin, the active principle of tannic acid, has been depended upon for the conversion of skins into leather. Tannic acid is widely spread through the vegetable world in the bark, leaves, and fruits of plants, the best known being that of oak-bark.

The art of leather-making is simple. The skins are unhaired and ‘fleshed’ or cleaned by removing the fatty matters that cling to the under surface. Left to soak in an infusion of tannin, time will do the rest. The art of the tanner is to expedite this process. In order to loosen the hair by softening the hides, they are steeped in lime-pits, and, when ‘handled’ or hooked out, are found to be in the state of gelatine. When cleansed from the lime—the most troublesome part of the process—the pores of the skins are greedy to absorb the tannin; and in a period ranging from weeks to years, a tannate of gelatine is formed, or what we call leather. On a small scale we may make leather in a teacup; for any animal jelly dissolved in water will fall in hardened flakes of true leather on the addition of few drops of tannic acid.

Science has ransacked the world to find tanning substances of quicker action than those in common use; but oak-bark maintains its rights, and tanners come back to it after repeated trials with a long list of other materials. Time seems to be a vital element in tanning, and what has been gained in time has been at the cost, as a rule, of quality in the product.

The lime in the hides has much to do with the after-processes. It is the great evil which tanners have to contend with, since no known method, hitherto, has been able to free the skins entirely from its presence. The plan followed from time beyond memory has been to soak and wash the fleshed skins in a bath of *bate* or *pure*, a euphemism for the refuse of dogs and other animals. How, with our strides in chemistry, a manufacture, ranking as one of the highest national importance, should, for ages, have been dependent upon a practice exciting disgust, which even apprenticeship and journey-work cannot conquer, is one of the curiosities of industrial life.

Relief hails from Australia. In return for the cattle with which we have replenished the empire colony, our brothers over there have long sent us hides and skins, and end by teaching us how to dress them. Mr E. P. Nesbit, a schoolmaster

of South Australia, and a gentleman of hereditary scientific tastes, since he is a descendant of the author of *Nesbit's Mensuration*, a work known in every English school, has taken the tanners in hand, and offers to teach them thrift in leather-making. Some time ago he invited a number of manufacturers and men of science to an exhibition of a new method of unloring hides and skins at the tanneries of Messrs Etty and Barrow of Grange Walk, Bermondsey. The result was a perfect success and full of promise. In less than an hour, instead of days or weeks, hides submitted to the new treatment were rendered absolutely free from lime, as well as from what the craft expressively calls ‘muck’—that is, fat and dirt, which more or less prevail in all hides and skins, and interfere with good tanning. Hitherto, mechanical means of repeated washings have been trusted to for extracting the lime which the skins imbibe. Animal refuse, as we have said, has been used to soften the water of the bath, and thus to open the pores of the skins, and the lime which they contained was, as it were, rinsed out, not dissolved, since it is soluble in water to a very small degree. In districts where the water is soft, this cleansing of the hides is easier without bate than in chalky districts, where the water is hard, the effect of the carbonate of lime in the water being to close the pores; and extra bate is required, sometimes even then without effect.

The new method of unloring hides and skins, patented by Mr E. P. Nesbit, can hardly be called a discovery or an invention. It is ‘a happy thought’ which strikes the mind of intelligence in the midst of customs petrified by tradition; an example of applied science, an elementary principle of chemistry put into industrial practice, and thereby lifting a rule of thumb into the region of the skilled arts. The ‘mere schoolboy’ knows that lime dissolves very slightly in water, but that it becomes immediately soluble if the water is charged with carbonic acid. The principle is exemplified in the common custom of softening hard water by adding more of the lime which made it hard. But, as the patentee naively states, the tanners knew the difficulty, but did not know the remedy; the chemists knew the remedy, but did not know the difficulty.

Let a short colloquy between the writer and the patentee explain itself.

‘How did the idea come into your head?’

‘Why, I got acquainted with an Australian tanner who happened to speak of the trouble his craft had in getting rid of the lime in the hides. That ought not to be difficult, I told him. Let me try my hand. With that I took a small piece of the saturated skin, then put it into a soda-water bottle with cold water, and charged the contents with carbonic acid gas, in the usual way of making soda-water. I took the skin back the next day, looking quite clean and plumped out. Is there any lime in that? “Not a particle,” was the answer, after testing.—“Then I have got at it,” said I; “and what can be done on a small scale can be done on a large.”—“You had better put the plan into practice here,” said my friend the tanner.—“No, indeed,” I rejoined; “I am off at once to England, the great leather market of the world.”

British tanners are a close corporation, conservatively standing in the old ways, and were not ready to believe in an outsider who professed to teach them their trade, which they had followed since the world was young. The patentee was, however, happy enough to meet with one or two enterprising men of business, as also with a capitalist, Mr Max Strauss, of Holburn Viaduct, who made himself master of the subject, and about a year ago, brought the working of the process to an issue in the tanneries of Messrs Barrow Brothers of Bermondsey. Since then, Messrs Etty and G. B. Barrow, of Grange Walk, have undertaken the agency for the production of leather on the new principle, to witness the working of which drew together the influential company referred to.

At this exhibition of the new process, the little slip of moist skin and the soda-water bottle were represented by a heap of stout limed hides, 'fleshed' and unhaired, in readiness the day before; and by a tank of cold water capable of immersing one hundred and fifty hides, corked down, so to speak, or better, say, with a 'patent stopper,' of a heavy lid, bolted down with stout iron screws to render the tank air-tight when full of hides. A tube through this, leading to the bottom of the tank, is put in connection with a gas generator, to which our attention is next called. The apparatus employed, constructed by Messrs Hayworth, Tyler, & Co., engineers, and as simple in principle as every part of the process, comprises a generator, gasometer, and small steam pumping-engine. The generator is of iron, charged with fourteen pounds of whiting, upon which, while kept stirred, a thin stream of dilute sulphuric acid trickles to about the same weight in the course of an hour. Carbonic acid gas generates rapidly, as is seen by the ascent of the gasometer, and is driven forward by the pumping-engine to the tank, which it enters through the pipe opening at the bottom.

A slight hitch or two, easily obviated, so far from proving a disadvantage, still more conclusively confirmed the correctness of the principle. The lid of the tank, from some trifling defect of the vulcanite fittings, was not quite airtight, whence the pressure of gas upon the hides was less than advised; while the generator had to be charged twice instead of once with whiting. A rough-and-ready experiment pardonably takes more time in preliminaries than when an industrial process is in full working and automatic order. Three-quarters of an hour passed in these observations, out of which we may assume that the hides were subjected to the action of the carbonic acid a full half-hour, or just half the normal time. This was meant to be a crucial test of the value of the process. The tank was opened and the hides hauled out, looking deceptively white and clean; for, upon scudding or scraping one of them upon the curved 'beam' used by tanners, so much 'muck'—namely, dirt and yellow grease—was pressed out, that the experts present were fain to own that such rapid and perfect cleansing had never before been accomplished. The clear cold tank-water was now cloudy-white with lime.

Was any lime left in the hides? The test of lime is the readiness of the hide to take the tannin. If free from lime, it is thirsty for the

infusion; if not free, the absorption is a long and tiresome process, beginning with a liquor of nearly spent tan, and then successive immersions for many weeks or months in liquors of higher and higher degrees of strength. The operative cut off a corner of the hide, held it for a couple of minutes in a strong infusion of tan, and handed it round for inspection. It had taken the tan at once, and at least three weeks' action upon the hide was condensed into two minutes. A remaining question as to the quality of the leather thus produced proved equally satisfactory. The curried hides and skins were of fine grain and beautifully supple. Their excellence has been particularly shown in their suitability for enamelled and japanned leathers for bags and patent-leather boots.

The impression made upon those who witnessed the process was, that this ancient art is on the eve of a great transformation both scientific and economic, which will raise its rank among our skilled industries and notably advance the national well-being. Mr Nesbit computes that, at the lowest, one-third of the time of leather-making will be saved. This alone must release some millions of the vast capital now sunk in the manufacture, to fructify in other industrial directions. Further, the cost of plant and material is brought to a minimum—the whiting and sulphuric acid are almost too cheap to enter into account, the unliming of five hundred hides being done for eighteenpence; while the mechanical appliances involve the most moderate outlay.

PARSON VENABLES' ADVENTURE.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAP. I.

ST FIMBARRUS is the name of a lonely little parish on a hillside in a distant county. The country round about is all wild moorland. From the church porch of St Fimbarrus you can see many miles of undulating downs, now rising into hills of respectable elevation, and again sinking into valleys, through which a little stream brawls among stunted trees. There are no trees in St Fimbarrus itself, save a few weakly firs in the vicar's garden, which he nurses with sedulous care, in the hope that they may one day afford some shelter from the fierce winds that sweep down the glens on every side towards the vicarage. It is a hope unlikely to be realised; certainly, its fulfilment is so distant that ere it comes, the vicar will have been laid in that other tenement of his, within sight of his study window, which he purchased when his last child was laid there.

It was a bright afternoon in May, and the vicar stood on the gravel sweep before his house, scanning the sky anxiously. He turned to gaze successively at each quarter of the heavens, inhaled rather dubiously several large mouthfuls of the air, to satisfy himself whether it tasted salt, as it must if the wind blew from the sea, the rainy quarter at St Fimbarrus; and then, with a brighter countenance, he re-entered the house.

'You may put on your things, Anna,' he cried out cheerfully as he crossed the hall, 'and tell Hugh to bring the pony round.'

'Then I shall get my cross-stitch pattern, after all; and I can talk with Mrs Hartle about the

butter.' So saying, Mrs Venables, in a state of some excitement, gathered up her shawl, her spectacles, and her knitting, on which she had been employed, in preparation for going up-stairs to make ready for the desired journey.

'You can talk to her about anything you please, my dear,' said the vicar, rather testily, for he was in truth somewhat tired of hearing of his wife's difficulties with regard to the cross-stitch pattern and the butter.

'I shall talk to her about those two things, and nothing else,' said the old lady with determination; 'we shan't have more than enough time to settle them.'

'Well, well, my dear, as long as you are satisfied,' returned the vicar.—'Will you be ready in ten minutes?'

'Not if you flurry me with calling to know how long I shall be. I have so many things to remember, and I can't tell what I've done with my tablets.—Belinda! Where is Belinda?—Oh, very well! I'm coming up-stairs, my love.'

The vicar went out again into the sunshine. He had not taken many turns along the walk beneath the windows of the house, when a crunching sound of wheels on the gravel announced the arrival of the pony.

'How is he to-day, Hugh?' asked the vicar.
'Pretty quiet?'

'Too much oats inside him, sir,' said the man, touching his hat. 'Oats goes to friskiness.'

'I'm afraid you're right, Hugh,' the vicar answered, observing how impatiently the pony was stamping on the gravel.—'Poor Charles! good Charles!' and he attempted to stroke the animal's nose—a compliment which Charles resented by first tossing his head, as if he wished to feel his master's fingers between his teeth, and then starting off at full racing speed in the direction of the open gateway. The vicar hung on to the back of the chaise. Hugh, muttering blasphemies, made desperate efforts to catch 'good Charles's' head; while in the midst of the confusion, a window was thrown up and Mrs Venables cried loudly: 'Stop, stop! We're not nearly ready yet.'

'I wish you'd make haste, my dear,' returned the vicar; 'this restive animal has nearly torn my arms out of the sockets.'

'Nonsense! You must keep him quiet.'

'That's more easily said than done; but we will try.'

'It's very easy, I'm sure,' returned the lady. 'Men have no tact. I'll come down presently with an apple.'

The vicar looked at Hugh and shook his head somewhat dubiously; he doubted the virtue of the apple.

'If the missus would leave his feed to me, sir, he wouldn't be half so lively,' remarked Hugh; 'but when ladies will go and fill his box with a double portion of oats, so as he's eatin' all day, and never goin' out at all!—'

'I know—I know,' the vicar said hastily. 'Ladies don't understand horse-flesh, Hugh.'

'They don't,' rejoined the man gruffly.

At this juncture, Mrs Venables sallied forth, accompanied by her niece Belinda, who carried several thick shawls and a heavy carriage rug.

'Shall we want all those wraps on such a bright day?' the vicar asked.

'Yes; indeed we shall. It will be very cold when the sun goes in; and with that, Mrs Venables took the wraps from her niece and stowed them carefully in the back seat. After satisfying herself that they were not likely to fall out, she went up to the pony's head. 'Naughty Charles!' she said, in a coaxing voice—'bad Charles, to startle your good mistress so, and pull your master's arms out of the sockets.'

This affectionate adjuration apparently did not penetrate to Charles's heart, for he whisked his head about, at the imminent risk of striking his mistress in the face; and being somewhat elated at the result of his last manoeuvre, he was steadily endeavouring to get on his hind-legs, with the apparent intention of dancing into the town.

'Better not touch him, ma'am,' advised Hugh. 'I'll hold him fast enough while you get in.'

'He seems quite excited to-day,' said Mrs Venables, a little nervously.—'I think you had better drive him, Theophilus.'

'O yes, Uncle Theo,' Miss Belinda interposed; 'do drive him yourself—he seems so very wild.'

'Stuff!' said the vicar. 'If Charles is at all fresh, Hugh's is a much safer hand on the reins than mine.—Get in, my dear, or we shall not reach the town to-day.'

But as Mrs Venables placed her foot upon the step, Charles made a sudden start, which, though checked on the instant by a sharp tug at his head, was almost sufficient to throw the old lady down.

'Theophilus,' she said, retreating two or three steps from the pony-carriage, and looking at her husband with a face full of apprehension, 'this pony is not himself to-day, and I must insist on your driving.'

'I know what's the matter with him, aunt,' said Miss Belinda mysteriously. 'Some pixy's got into him. I've seen a cow go on just like that at milking-time, and they always know then that the pixies are about the farm.'

The vicar turned round angrily. 'How often am I to tell you, Belinda, that I won't have those silly tales repeated about my house! Is it possible for me, do you think, to expel superstition from the minds of the honest people over whom I am set, if one of my own family spreads it abroad?'

'Never mind, never mind,' interposed Mrs Venables. 'Belinda didn't mean any harm. It's quite likely she may be right too; and that's another reason why you should drive, Theophilus. I always feel so safe when you have the reins.'

'It's not at all a well-grounded feeling, my dear,' replied the vicar, 'if you only knew it. You are vastly safer with Hugh.—But there; I give way.—Hugh, you must stay at home. Look out for us about half-past six.'

'And, Belinda,' called Mrs Venables as the pony-carriage passed out on to the road, 'have a little fire, and keep your uncle's slippers warm.'

As soon as Charles emerged upon the high-road, the evil spirit came forth from him and he fell into a steady trot.

'There, you see, Theophilus; he is quite quiet now; I knew he would be with you.'

The vicar could not repress a slight feeling of triumph as he contrasted the present demure conduct of the pony with his late obstreperous behaviour. 'He certainly is,' he answered. 'I begin to think I must have some of the qualities of a professional whip.'

Charles's conduct was indeed exemplary; and a steady uneventful drive of about an hour, all down hill, brought the vicar and his wife to the top of the steep descent above the town.

'There is Dr Hartle!' exclaimed Mrs Venables excitedly. 'Don't you think he is growing very gray?'

'Not more so than he has been for the last ten years, my dear.—How are you, Hartle?'

The doctor, mounted on a stout brown cob, had ridden up alongside the vicar's carriage and was exchanging greetings. 'Jane will be delighted to see you,' said he. 'She has been complaining for three days past that she sees no visitors now. You will stay and take tea with us?'

The vicar demurred to this proposal, and the point was not settled when they arrived at the door of the doctor's pretty dwelling.

'Jane!' cried the doctor, pushing open the door of his parlour: 'here is Mrs Venables.—I am awfully glad you came in to-day, Venables; for I have just got a batch of music which I want to show you.'

'I can't think,' said the vicar, 'why you go foraging among all this newfangled jingle, when you don't half know the works of the old men who really understood where noise begins and music ends.'

'I declare,' said the doctor energetically, 'if a month passes without my seeing you, Venables, you retrograde in the most shocking way. Let me see—March, April. It is barely five weeks since we spent that delightful evening together where you really did begin to see what fine work had been turned out in the last thirty years.'

'Yes, I know,' the vicar admitted; 'but when I came to think it over, I perceived that I was wrong.'

'I quite expected it!' ejaculated Dr Hartle. 'I knew you would go back to your musty fugues and canons. Well, I shall have to convert you again, that's all. Here is a batch of songs by Liszt now. Read that over to yourself, and then I'll sing it.'

'Liszt?' said Mr Venables, taking the sheet of music. 'He was a man of deplorable character.'

The doctor muttered something beneath his breath, at which his friend looked up hastily; but he was wise enough not to repeat it.

'This is very strange and eccentric music,' said the vicar, after carefully perusing the song; 'and the harmonies seem against all rule. Here is the pedal actually used in a descending scale.'

'My dear sir, how often must I tell you that the breach of formal rules never can condemn any music if the effect is good! Now, listen!' The doctor possessed a very sweet tenor, not powerful, but admirably trained, and he rendered the song extremely well.

'There's merit about that music,' the vicar said; 'but what a pity that a man of talent should allow himself such license.'

This remark led to a long discussion. It was an old dispute, and every inch of the ground of battle was familiar to both the combatants. A vast array of authorities was marshalled; hosts of opinions, of every degree of weight, were adduced; volumes of reference were piled up on the table to a mountainous height; phrases without number were hummed, sung, played on

the doctor's excellent piano, or even drummed out on the table. The afternoon wore away, and neither of the disputants was in the least inclined to admit himself worsted, when the town clock chimed six, and the vicar, starting up, declared he had had no idea it was so late, and that he must not lose a moment in setting out on his homeward journey.

'I should be very sorry to be out after dark,' he said. 'The roads across the downs are very confusing in a bad light.'

'Pooh! You should know them well enough. There's an excellent light, too, till nearly eight o'clock now.—What, won't you be convinced? Then, I'll order round your pony.—Where is Mrs Venables?'

Where Mrs Venables was, nobody seemed to know. The housemaid was certain she had heard the two ladies talking up-stairs not ten minutes before, while the cook was equally positive that she had seen them walking in the garden. It was quickly ascertained that they were not in either of these places now, and messengers were despatched in every direction in which it seemed likely they had gone. The pony had been at the door for twenty minutes, however, and Mr Venables was in a fever of impatience to be gone, before his wife and Mrs Hartle came strolling slowly down the street talking as leisurely as if nobody had been waiting for them.

The vicar was a man of temper; he forbore to reproach his wife, and merely pointed out to her that in a few minutes the town clock would sound half-past six, the hour at which they had arranged to be at home.

'Yes; I knew it would be so,' said the old lady calmly; 'we always are late when you begin to quarrel with Dr Hartle about your crotchetts and your quavers.'

'My dear,' rejoined the vicar, with just the smallest tinge of reproach in his voice, 'if you had been ready when I was, we should have reached the top of Dumbleby Hill by this time.'

'You shan't throw the fault on me, Theophilus,' said his wife firmly. 'You were to blame, and you alone.—Now, listen to what Mrs Hartle told me.'

Mrs Hartle's news proved interesting enough to beguile the tedium of the weary climb up Dumbleby Hill; and as Charles toiled slowly across the road from side to side of the steep ascent, neither his master nor his mistress observed that thick clouds had obscured the setting sun and that the air was growing dense and moist. It was only when, on reaching the hilltop, the vicar shook out the reins and urged Charles forward, that he looked back and saw that the town was hidden from sight by wreaths of mist. The hedgerows, too, were beginning to look ghostly; little drifts of cloud were stealing along the hollows; and the vicar, as he glanced uneasily about him, could not conceal from himself the conviction that before they could reach the vicarage the fog must have surrounded them altogether.

'I wish we were at home,' he said, cracking his whip; 'or, at all events, over the next hill.'

'Oh, I don't think much of this,' replied Mrs Venables cheerfully. 'We have been out when

it was much thicker. I haven't told you half my news yet.—Do you know, Robert Tomkins is going to emigrate! Think of that—with all those young children. I call it infamous!

'If he can't get anything to do here?' suggested the vicar, glancing nervously over his shoulder.

This remark led Mrs Venables off into a tirade on the evils of emigration, which she regarded as a species of impiety, an unwarrantable interference with the decrees of providence, who knew much better where a man was likely to thrive than his own judgment could tell him. The good old lady was in the habit of enforcing this belief with copious extracts, not only from various pious writers, but also from her own experience, and in this rhetorical exercise she became so much engrossed that she observed nothing of the thickening of the mist to a solid wall around them, nor of the slackening of Charles's pace as his master's nervous hand now urged him forward, now checked him sharply with a momentary fear that he had lost the road.

'I don't know what to make of this,' the vicar exclaimed at last; and, handing over the reins to his wife, he sprang out. 'I can't tell what road we are in.'

The fog had indeed become so dense that the borders of the road were not in sight; only a little space of a few feet immediately around the carriage was visible; all beyond was a uniform mass of cloud.

'Don't go out of sight, Theophilus,' Mrs Venables entreated; 'I shall be very frightened if you do.'

'Nonsense!' replied the vicar, who was groping about in the mist. 'How am I to ascertain where we are unless I can find some landmark?'

'But you can do that in the carriage. If you will only get in, we can drive up to the edge of the road and see quite well. If you go out into the mist, you will never get back to me again.'

The vicar returned with a dejected countenance and climbed into his seat.

'I think I saw the great quoit which was overturned by the storm last February,' he said; 'but one looks so much like another in this light.—If only Hugh were with us!'

A MUSING ANSWERS.

OUR courts of law have furnished us at various times with very witty and amusing remarks, lawyers and prisoners alike being guilty on this score. Doubtless, every one has heard of the Irishman, who, in reply to the question, 'Guilty or not guilty?' said 'he would like to hear the evidence before he would plead.' A magistrate in another case was dealing with a vagrant, and in a severe tone addressed him thus: 'You have been up before me half-a-dozen times this year,' thereby giving him to understand that he had appeared too often on the scene. The prisoner, however, was equal to the occasion, for he replied: 'Come, now, judge—none of that. Every time I've been here, I've seen you here. You are here more than I am. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.'

Curran, the Irish advocate, was one day examining a witness, and failing to get a direct answer, said: 'There is no use in asking you questions, for I see the villain in your face.'—'Do you, sir?' said the man, with a smile. 'Faix, I never knew before that my face was a looking-glass.' On another occasion, he was out walking with a friend who was extremely punctilious in his conversation. The latter, hearing a person near him say curiosity for curiosity, exclaimed: 'How that man murders the English language!'—'Not so bad as that,' replied Curran; 'he has only knocked an i out!'

'Prisoner at the bar,' said a judge, 'is there anything you would wish to say before sentence is passed upon you?'—The prisoner looked towards the door, and remarked that he would like to say 'Good-evening, if it was agreeable to the company.'

'I remember,' says Lord Eldon, 'Mr Justice Gould trying a case at York, and when he had proceeded for about two hours, he observed: 'Here are only eleven jurymen in the box; where is the twelfth?'—'Please you, my lord,' said one of the eleven, 'he has gone away about some business; but he has left his verdict with me.'

This is almost on a par with a case tried in one of the Lancashire courts, when Serjeant Cross was a resident barrister in that county. The jury having consulted and agreed upon their verdict, were addressed by the clerk of the peace: 'How say you, gentlemen of the jury; do you find for the plaintiff or the defendant?'

'What say yo? I dunnot understand,' said the foreman.

'Why, as you have decided, all I want to know is, whether your verdict is for the plaintiff or the defendant?'

The foreman was still greatly embarrassed; but he replied: 'Whoy, I raly dunnot know, but we're for him as Mester Cross is for!'

Lord Cockburn's looks, tones, language, and manner were always such as to make one think that he believed every word he said. On one occasion, before he was raised to the Bench, when defending a murderer, although he failed to convince the judge and jurymen of the innocence of his client, yet he convinced the murderer himself that he was innocent. Sentence of death was pronounced, and the day of execution fixed for, say, the 20th January. As Lord Cockburn was passing the condemned man, the latter seized him by the gown, saying: 'I have not got justice, Mr Cockburn—I have not got justice.' To this the advocate coolly replied: 'Perhaps not; but you'll get it on the 20th of January.'

Witty and humorous replies, however, are not confined to law-courts, so we may leave the judges and their satellites and gather up a few fragments elsewhere. An Irish recruit about to be inspected by Frederick the Great, was told that he would be asked these questions: How old are you? How long have you been in the service? Are you content with your pay and rations? He prepared his answers accordingly. It so happened, however, that the king began with the second question: 'How long have you been in the service?' Paddy glibly replied: 'Twenty years.'—'Why,' said the king, 'how old are you?—

'Six months!'—'Six months!' exclaimed the king; 'surely either you or I must be mad.'—'Yes, both, Your Majesty'—a confession scarcely anticipated by the royal examiner.

A good story is told of a general and his wife, resident in Ireland, who were constantly pestered by a beggar woman to whom they had been very generous. One morning, at the accustomed hour, when the lady was getting into her carriage, the old woman began: 'Agh! my lady, success to yer ladyship, and success to yer honour's honour, this morning, of all the days in the year, for sure didn't I drame last night that her ladyship gave me a pound of tay, and yer honour gave me a pound of tobacco!'

'But, my good woman,' said the general, 'do you not know that dreams always go by the rule of contrary?'

'Do they so, plase yer honour?' rejoined the old woman. 'Then, it must be yer honour that will give me the tay, and her ladyship that will give me the tobacco.'

While dealing with the Emerald Isle, we may be allowed to quote several other equally witty and amusing replies, such as could only proceed from a warm-hearted son of Erin. It is said that when Sir Richard Steele was asked how it happened that his countrymen made so many bulls, he replied: 'It is the effect of the climate, sir: if an Englishman were born in Ireland, he would make as many.' He was therefore—perhaps intentionally—guilty of making a bull while seeking to explain their origin.

An American and an Irishman were once riding together, and coming across an old gallows by the wayside, Jonathan thought he would have a quiet laugh at Paddy's expense. 'You see that, I calculate,' said he, pointing to the gallows. 'Now, where would you be if the gallows had its due?' Paddy replied: 'Riding alone.'

Another Irishman was observed writing a letter in a very large hand, and when questioned as to why he employed such large characters, replied: 'Arrah, dear, an' isn't it to my poor mother I'm writing? An' she is so very deaf that I'm writing her a loud letter.'

'Come down this instant!' said the boatswain to a mischievous son of Erin who had been idling in the round-top. 'Come down, I say, and I'll give you a good dozen!'—'Troth, sir, and I wouldn't come down if you'd give me two dozen.'—Another seafaring Irishman was engaged hauling a rope into a small boat, when the captain of the ship, who was on the poop, ordered him to 'bear a hand.' The captain then took a turn on deck, but on his return Barney was still working hard at the line. 'Why, haven't you reached the end yet?' cried the captain.—'No, indeed, master; and, by my soul, I've been looking for the end till I am beginning to think it has got none. I do believe, sir, somebody has cut it off!'

Foote, on his return from a visit to Ireland, was asked if he had seen Cork. 'No,' he replied; 'but when I was in Dublin, I saw a great many drawings of it.'—Pope, notwithstanding his diminutive and misshapen figure, is said to have been not a little susceptible of even personal vanity. One day he asked Swift what people thought of him in Ireland. 'Why,' said Swift, 'they think that you are a very little man, but a very great poet.' Pope instantly

retorted: 'And in England they think of you exactly the reverse.'

During the performance of one of Dryden's plays, an actress gave the line,

'My wound is great because it is so small,'

in as moving and affecting a tone as she could, and then paused, looking very distressed. The Duke of Buckingham (Villiers), who was in one of the boxes, rose immediately from his seat and added in a loud ridiculing tone of voice:

'Then 'twould be greater, were it none at all.'

This had such an effect upon the audience that they hissed the actress from the stage.

Prince Albert used to relate how, while at Osborne, he was in the habit of getting up early and walking about his farm. One morning, when passing a farmer's house, he stopped to make some inquiries, knocked at the door, and asked the man-servant if his master was in. The servant replied: 'He is in, sir, but not down-stairs.'—'Oh, very well,' was the Prince's reply; and he was about to leave.—'Would you be kind enough to leave your name, sir?' said the servant.—'Oh, it does not matter,' said the Prince.—'Because,' continued the servant, 'my master would be angry with me if I did not tell him who called.'—'Very well,' said his Royal Highness; 'you may say Prince Albert.' Upon which the man drew back, looked up significantly, put his thumb to the tip of his nose, extended his fingers, and exclaimed, 'Walker!'

FOR THE LAST TIME.

WITHIN this room she passes her still days!
I pause upon the threshold, while my eyes

Gaze wistfully around, for memories
Of her sweet face, her thoughts, her words and ways,
Shall make the sunshine that through life's dark maze

May gild the pathway with its golden dyes;
And when I walk far off 'neath alien skies

My heart shall still be gladdened by its rays.

For the last time I look around. I hear
No sound save patterning ivy 'gainst the pane.

Ah! how my heart grows chilled with sudden fear
Lest this last hope that I have held be vain—

Lest I should never see your fair face, dear,
Or clasp once more your hand in mine again!

But no; I hear your footstep at the door.

Love, you can meet me thus with smiling face,
While I—I do but long for breathing space

To give these cold stiff lips the power once more
To greet you calmly, as they could before

I knew the truth. And yet, would I retracce
The path that I have trod, and leave this place

With the heart quiet and free that once I bore?

I cannot tell. Thoughts wander through my brain
Like dreams that come and go beyond our will.

You speak, I know; I answer back again;
But nought of all seems real to me, until

We come to say good-bye. Then bitter pain
Gives me sure proof I am not dreaming still!

KATE MELLERSH.